

2019-01-14

# Correspondence of Bracha Fuld (Berlin, 1926 - Tel Aviv, 1946) in the Netzorg Family Papers Collection at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

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## Correspondence of Bracha Fuld (Berlin, 1926 - Tel Aviv, 1946) in the Netzorg Family Papers Collection at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

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### Introduction

A considerable number of women had left their mark in the Jewish community's struggle for independence in British Mandate Palestine. The most famous example is probably Hannah Senesh (1921-1944), who left Hungary for British Mandate Palestine in 1939. Others, like Bracha Fuld (1926-1946), remain relatively unknown. Who was Bracha Fuld? Why was she important? The goal of this paper is to familiarize the audience with the history of Bracha Fuld and to share our preliminary assessment of her correspondence housed in the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library.<sup>1</sup>



FIGURE 1. Bracha Fuld, circa 1946. In: *Davar*, March 27, 1946

Bracha Fuld was born in Berlin on December 26, 1926 and arrived in British Palestine in the summer of 1939, at age twelve. Her mother Charlotte (also known as Lotte) arrived in British Palestine a couple of months before Bracha. Both had spent about one year in London before moving to Palestine. Bracha's older sister, Petra, born in 1923, arrived in the United States in September 1938, at the age of fifteen. Their father, Lothar, who was very patriotic, served in the German army during World War I. He apparently committed suicide a couple of days after *Kristallnacht* (the wave of violent anti-Jewish attacks that took place on November 9 and 10, 1938 in Germany).<sup>2</sup> Lotte's mother (Bracha's grandmother) settled in British Palestine in 1934.

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<sup>1</sup> We should thank Olga Virakhovskaya, Archivist at Bentley Historical Library, for encouraging us to engage with the Netzorg Family Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Lothar Fuld was born on July 27, 1886 and died on November 20, 1938 (according to correspondence between Petra with Sari Gal, Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box 12).



FIGURE 2. Lotte Fuld (Bracha's mother)

In: Miriam Dee, "The Story of Bracha Fuld", *The Jewish Woman*, Nov. 1946, page.4.  
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 2, Newspaper clippings.  
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library



FIGURE 3. Bracha (left) with her father Lothar and sister Petra, circa 1930.  
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box 35, Petra and Bracha Fuld.  
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Bracha's original name was Barbara, but it was changed to Bracha (a less Diasporic name) when she arrived in Palestine. Bracha became a member of the *Palmach* (the elite fighting

force of the *Haganah*, the underground army of the Jewish community in British Mandate Palestine). She was killed on March 26, 1946, during what was later called Wingate Night, an operation designed to assist illegal Jewish immigrants on the vessel *Wingate* to disembark on the coast of Tel Aviv.<sup>3</sup>

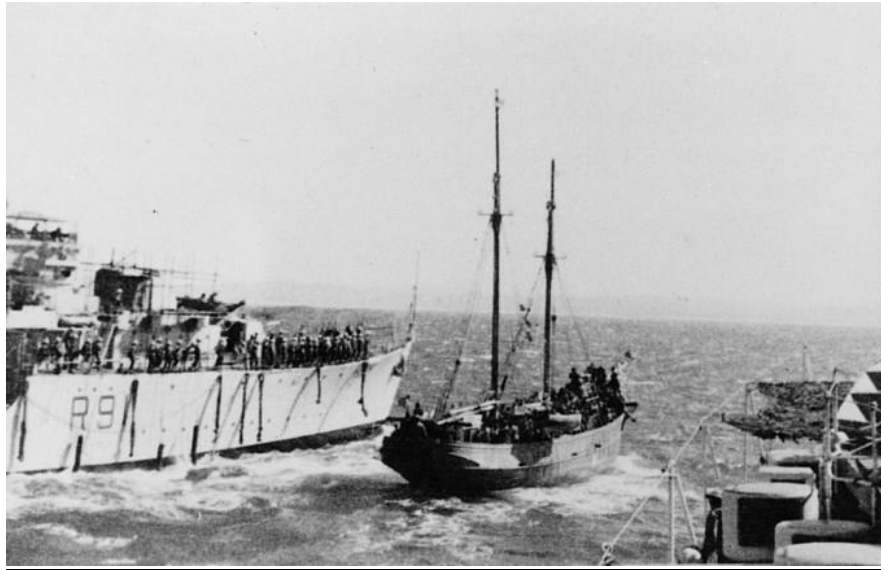


FIGURE 4. The “Wingate” surrounded by British Destroyers.  
Source: [http://www.palyam.org/English/Hahapala/hf/hf\\_Wingate](http://www.palyam.org/English/Hahapala/hf/hf_Wingate).  
Consulted April 8, 2018.

The vessel sailed from the small island of Palestrina, Italy, (not far from Venice), carrying 238 *ma'apilim* (Jews who immigrated illegally to Palestine during British control in the 1930s and 1940s). The plan was for this vessel to rendezvous with the vessel “Tel Hai” and transfer her passengers to that vessel. That rendezvous did not occur, and the *Wingate*, sailing on a very rough sea, continued on her route to Palestine (Ben-Tzur, date of publication not provided).

The illegal ship *Wingate* was seized by the British at sea, and the operation was canceled. In one of the few clashes between the British and the *Palmach*, Fuld was killed. As pointed out by researchers like Nir Mann (2011) and others, she immediately came to symbolize female fighters in the campaign for independence. Some months after Bracha was killed, another ship of illegal Jewish immigrants was named after her.<sup>4</sup> The famous Israeli poet Natan Alterman, for example, wrote poems dedicated to Bracha in his column *ha-Ṭur ha-shevi'i* (later published in his book *Yir ha-Yonah*). Kurt Singer (1951) included Bracha among the “*greatest women spies*” in the world (because of her supposed affair with a British officer), and Sari Gal (1995) wrote a kind of historical novel about her (in Hebrew).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This vessel was named in honor of the British Major, Orde Charles Wingate, who, while on tour of duty in Palestine during the years of the riots of 1936-1939, helped the Yishuv (Jewish community) in defending itself against Arab groups.

<sup>4</sup> About the vessel *Bracha Fuld* see Yarkoni (51-52).

<sup>5</sup> The Netorg Family Papers Collection contains drafts of English translations of some chapters of Sari Gal's book (in box 2, folder *Bracha Fuld*, Biographical, 1982-2012 and undated).



FIGURE 5. News of Bracha's death in Tel Aviv's Hebrew press.  
 Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 2, Newspaper clippings.  
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

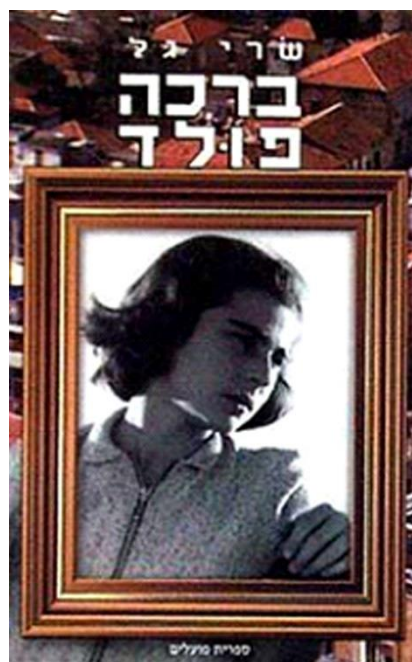


FIGURE 6. Cover of *Berakhah Fuld* (1999), by Sari Gal.



It is worth pointing out that both Kurt Singer and Sari Gal tend to transit between fiction and reality. These authors usually do not mention their sources and deliberately fill gaps without documented evidence. Therefore, both can be read as a kind of historical fiction. Sari Gal had access to some of the letters Bracha and her mother wrote, but does not mention them in an academic fashion. A more scholarly portrait of Bracha Fuld appears in an article written by Judith Baumel in 2004 (in Hebrew). None of these writers, however, had full access to the correspondence written by Bracha Fuld and her mother, housed at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library since 2012.

### **The correspondence of Bracha Fuld**

Let us now turn our attention to Bracha's correspondence. The letters she exchanged with her sister Petra are housed in the Bentley Historical Library, which is one of the twenty-two campus libraries in the University of Michigan system. The Bentley Historical Library "collects the materials for and promotes the study of the histories of two great, intertwined institutions, the State of Michigan and the University of Michigan" (Bentley Library's website).<sup>6</sup>



FIGURE 7. Bentley Historical Library (April 2018)

We visited the Bentley Library to prepare this AJL conference paper, which offers just a brief overview of the materials related to Bracha Fuld that are housed there. These materials are part of the Netzorg Family Papers, a collection that includes thirty linear feet of materials distributed in thirty-seven boxes of which boxes one and two contain the Fuld Family Papers series. The collection also contains hundreds of pictures of the Fuld family, including many pictures of Bracha (visual material series, box 35). The collection was donated by David M. Netzorg in 2011. David is the son of Bracha's sister, Petra. Petra and her husband Jock Netzorg owned the Cellar Book Shop, a bookshop located at 18090 Wyoming Avenue in Detroit, Michigan, which specialized in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. They supplied books for the University of Michigan Library and many other universities in the United States. Jock Netzorg's father,

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<sup>6</sup> <http://bentley.umich.edu/>

Morton Isadore Netzorg, was a University of Michigan alumnus who for decades lived in the Philippines with his wife Katherine.<sup>7</sup>

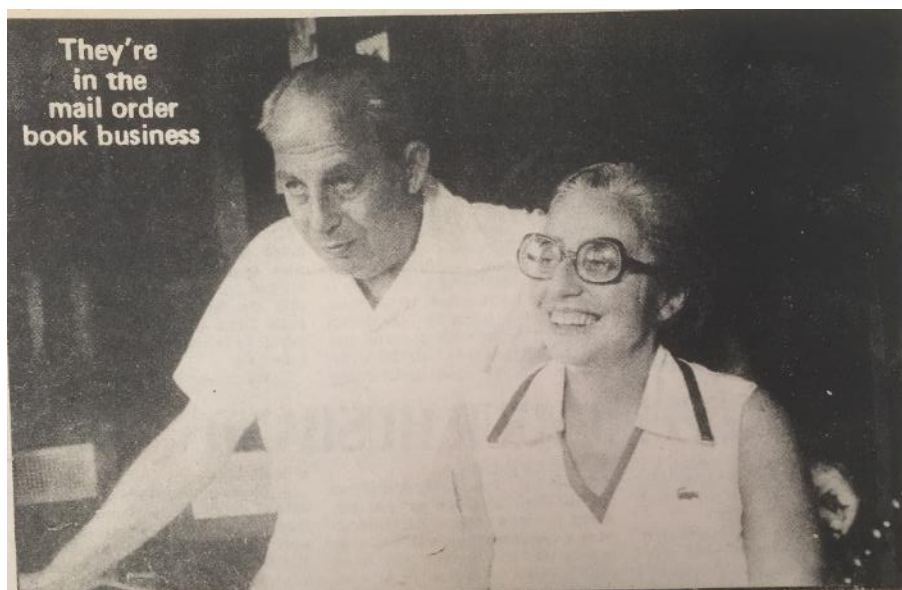


FIGURE 8. Jock Netzorg and Petra Fuld Netzorg, circa 1976.  
In: *Mr. & Ms. Magazine*, May 11, 1976, page 71.  
Netzorg Family Papers, Box 37.  
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

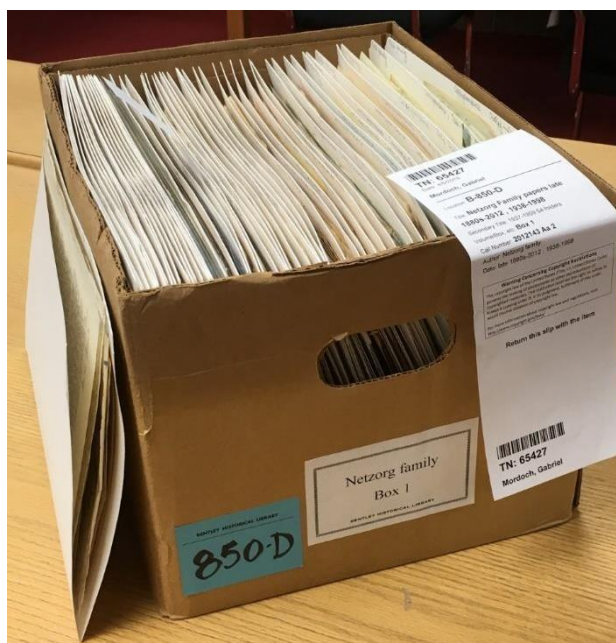


FIGURE 9. Box number one, Fuld family correspondence, Bentley Historical Library  
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

<sup>7</sup> More information is located in the finding aid available at: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhlead/umich-bhl-2012143?view=text>.

Box number one contains part of the Fuld Family Papers (shown above). The folders are divided by month and year, starting with 1937 and finishing with 1959. Sometimes, more than one month is combined in the same folder. In addition, sometimes there is one folder for the entire year. Between 1937 and March 1946, there are twenty-six folders. Each folder contains an average of approximately fifteen letters, so we calculate that there may be around four hundred letters written during the period Bracha was alive.<sup>8</sup>

Lotte Fuld, mother of Bracha and Petra, wrote the majority of these 400 letters. Almost all of the letters were sent to Petra, who moved from Berlin to the United States in 1938 and settled in Detroit before 1944. Therefore, on one hand, we have Bracha, her mother Lotte, and her grandmother, all living in Palestine, and on the other hand, Petra in the United States. We have the letters Petra received, but we do not have the letters sent by Petra to the family in Palestine (at least not those letters sent during the period in which Bracha was alive). Some of the letters are written in German, some in English. Sometimes the language switches in the middle of the letter. Some letters are typed, others handwritten.

It is worth mentioning that the letters not only tell us about the Fuld family, but also contain vivid descriptions of life in Tel Aviv in the 1940s. These letters are therefore an important document for researchers of the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community of Palestine prior to the founding of the State of Israel. There are also many linguistic aspects worth studying in the correspondence. The few letters written in Europe are documents about Jewish life on that continent on the eve of World War II.

As previously mentioned, Lotte Fuld (Bracha's mother) wrote the majority of the letters. Sometimes, however, Bracha and her grandmother also participated.<sup>9</sup> We see it for example in two letters written in English, from May 16, 1942 and September 5, 1942, and in one letter in German, from July 7, 1942, where Bracha added just one line. She usually used her nickname "Babs" to sign the letters.

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<sup>8</sup> The Netzorg Family Papers collection is briefly described at the series and subseries level, and a possible project would be to describe it at the folder level, or even at the item level. It would be, however, a huge undertaking. Instead, a more modest task would be to describe, at the item level, the few letters written by Bracha.

<sup>9</sup> Lotte resided in Israel until around 1960, then moved to California. She was born around 1907 died in 1968. Petra Fuld died in 2008.



you personally. - Annacotten no more. The shop at 111 is very good, but I guess it will definitelyaken next month, as only because summer is approaching. But as I told you, I can smelt everything - for the time being a shabby weather is wonderful, I already started my bathing - season and had a good sun-burning last week-end. When I am sitting in my room at present, all windows open - so sunny with flowers and birds, and looking at your photos standing on my writing-desk - I am terribly longing for you both, to have you here together with us, to keep you with me, what a pity that we have to live separated and when, when will we meet again? I am sure that you both would be filled with enthusiasm here, one can't describe it, one has to come and feel and smell the special atmosphere. Well, we have to wait one year, two years? That is nothing in the course of history, but it is yet a lot in the course of a human life. As to the problems of tomany problems to be solved, darling, take up my principle! there is private worry, disappointments in business or private life, if clients, customers, or too many trifles matters. I always mention! considering that hundreds of thousand men are killed in Europe every day, that people are robbed from their homes, families, lovers, friends are separated by all those dreadful war-conditions, without knowing whether they will meet again, all our little private scandals are nonsense and not worth a tick of the clock. I think that the solution of my private problems at the solution of the one big one, ----- "I think this principle is a good help against worrying, and helps us to baptizise all things. Well, after that experience, I am convinced that this solution to bring this letter to an end, for I have to answer some other letters. - Please, number your letters, it is a good control whether mail goes lost, and write soon and long, I love to hear from you. I wish you Jack's birthday! Keep fit, and all the very best, Hense, of love and kisses.

Hense

By the way, I forgot to tell you that I painted a very nice girl portrait for Leo, a young collective artist, who lives in Berlin, who is a very nice person, and who is now in the A.T.S. She thought it was a beautiful thing, I thought I will write you the X and the Y.

Hense

Darling! Well! We got you letter, thank you so much. I hope shall write you more, when I shall have finished and succeed (3 boys) in the examinations next week (like: Engelsberg). We are then many times to you and Jack.

Love Yours  
Babe.

all my love to both of you,  
no more more pleased about your  
letter, but I am really a "good"  
to read it. - Jack.

FIGURE 10. Letter by Lotte and Bracha Fuld from May 16, 1942.  
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1942  
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

[illegible]

7.XII. I'll finish this letter right now for otherwise it would hang around many more days - and I don't like to write too - next week Palestine has a mourning week, you have read it in the papers, I guess, in order to protest against those dreadful cruelties and slaughter of the Jews - and I have a terrible feeling that such things can happen in modern times, which have boasted to have proved being human and civilized, and that a single devilish man can succeed in putting the world into such a dreadful mood. I should that the remainder of the Jews and finally humanity from perishing, is to conquer the Nazis to destroy as quickly as possible the devil and his followers and to make tabula rasa with them. We were informed that aunt Jenny and Olga are in Theresienstadt as well as part of Elisabeth's family, and lots of friends of mine got news with the Red Cross that their good parents are to have better conditions - they say my news from your family, week days, well, derlingens, I'll finish now, all the best to your birthday letter - times are hurrying - I send next letter will be already your letters. Love to everybody. Heaps of kisses

Munt

Dearest Babs, I am very sorry that you have not got my 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> I answered your enquiries about my changed <sup>address</sup> ~~address~~ of mine. I would have told you my way, but have missed it. I shall write to you again. Well, now about your "family addition". I must say that I am just shocked when I read your letter. But it is the kind and my duty to tell you my opinion about it. Well, I can only be happy if you are so dead & believe you are. But it is a real joy to hear of you in Vienna. For days I have been thinking of things you are in good condition, and please take care of yourself. I hope you are in good condition, and please take care of yourself. I think we have nothing to do with you, because all I had to do was to think about which news do the best. All news very hard to me & with a so long letter what I do not do often. Anyway, I think it clear and change for you - please give my regards to Babs.

Will love  
Babs

My dearest Babs,  
I was really awfully surprised about your letter which the evening news, of November 1<sup>st</sup>, and I just got your mother's. — I hope, she will be one of the kinds of your baby and we can soon see, we see you and your little. It is wonderful, that Hannah and I were have a baby because I always think on these things, and I was coming to you and you all was — was that I was much sad, my dear Babs, she really will have or what? I hope, you feel that is strange, at your disposal — would your baby is born. I'll be the best for, Babs of you, a lot of kisses for you, love  
Gunter Durr

FIGURE 11. Letter #31, by Lotte and Bracha Fuld, from September 5, 1942.  
 Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1942  
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

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Tel-Aviv 23. 7. 42

Liebstes Floechen!

Diesen Namen hast Du sicher schon lange nicht mehr gehoert, aber mir ist er eben so eingefallen. Ich schreibe Dir in Deutsch weil ich Dir einiges zu sagen habe was ich in English nicht so gut kann. Ich werde sicher viele Fehler machen, denn Deutschschreiben bin ich nicht mehr gewohnt, aber da Du Hebraeisch nicht verstehst muss es eben so gehen. - Mich hat ziemlich erstaunt oder vielmehr gesaertert, was Du ueber mich und meinen Ansichten ueber den Krieg geschrieben hast. Ich glaube dass Du entweder nicht verstanden hast oder nicht verstehen wolltest, was ich sagte, denn ich weiss eben so gut wie Du was Krieg ist und was dieser Krieg fuer uns, besonders fuer uns Juden, bedeutet und was unsere Pflcht in diesem Krieg ist um unsere Zukunft als Juden, wenn ueberhaupt von Zukunft die Rede sein darf, was wir doch alle hoffen, ich auch nach unseren Ideen, Zielen und Forderungen gestalten zu koennen. Und von wegen "erst 16 Jahre" wie Du schreibst, Du kannst Dir doch vorstellen, dass die zionistisch-idealistische Jugend in Palestina nicht warten kann bis sie graue Haare bekommt um sich dann erst eine politische Meinung, hinsichtlich unserer Lage hier, zu bilden. Du wirst verstehen, dass ich mich garnicht einem solchen Urteil ueber den Krieg hergeben kann, da dieser Krieg auch unserer ist und da unsere Zukunft mit dem Ende des Krieges in ungenaeher Naechte liegt. Also ich hoffe Du siehst ein dass Du Dich geirrt hast. Wenn ich es wagen darf Dir zu entgegenen, da ich ja erst fast 16 bin, moechte ich Dir sagen dass Du Dich irrst wenn Du meinst dass dieser Krieg kein Krieg der Ideale ist. Ich denke er ist es, denn es besteht die grosse Frage: Welcher der Lebens- oder Regierungsformen haelt sich laenger und an welche koemte sich die Menschliche Gesellschaft anpassen ohne ihre Werte zu verlieren, Demokratie oder Faschismus. Und da man sich auf eine Seite schlagen muss, wenn auch keine ganz zusaegt, so waehlt man die, die den eigenen Idealen am naechsten steht. Der Sieg unserer, d.h. der antifaschistischen Seite bringt uns einige Schritte naeher unserem Ziele. So kaempfen wir und geben unsere Leute, um diesen Sieg zu Gunsten der Alliierten herbei zu fuehren!! Doch genug davon. - Ich war 6 Wochen auf dem Land und gehe in einigen Tagen noch mal zur Arbeit, dies ist unser Kriegsdienst. Ich bin jetzt in die Unterprima veretzt und habe noch 2 Jahre bis zum Abitur. Was naecher sein wird weiss ich nicht. Meine Zukunft liegt in den Haenden unserer Zukunft hier und wird sich aus den Zeiten ergeben. Alles andere hat Dir doch sicher Mutt schon geschrieben. Ich wuerde mich freuen wenn Du mir diesen Brief persoenlich beantworten wuerdest und in Deutsch, da mir dies in English schwer fallen wuerde. Ich hoffe, dass Du Zeit finden wirst!! Gruesse Jock oftmals. Ich bitte ihn um Entschuldigung dass ich Deutsch schrieb. Falls es ihn interessiert, uebersetze es ihm.

Herzliche Gruesse und Kuesse  
Bele

FIGURE 12. Letter by Lotte Fuld with Bracha Fuld's inscription, July 7, 1942.

Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1942

Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

The collection also contains letters in German written entirely by Bracha prior to her arrival in Palestine. For example, two letters from Berlin (October 17 and November 17, 1938) and one letter from Lausanne (December 14, 1938):



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Berlin d. 17.10.38

Bracha

Mein geliebter kleiner Floh!

Bin ich nicht reizend,  
dass ich Dir soeben schreibe, trotzdem ich auf mei-  
nen letzten Brief noch keine Antwort habe? Eigent-  
lich ist es gar völlig egoistisch, denn er kommt auch  
jetzt erst erreicht haben. Na also, es ist ja e-  
gal. Für mich hat der Winter schon begonnen,  
trotzdem es erst Ende Oktober ist. Da gehe  
nämlich morgen Ski fahren. Im  
Sportpark. Heute habe ich meine Skis  
eingepackt und manche mal die doppelten ge-  
nommen und außerdem habe ich mir aus  
deinem Doppelmantelalbum ein paar  
doppelte genommen. Ist doch nicht schlimm?  
Ich wünsche mir zum Geburtstag ein Baum  
und fange noch einmal richtig an. Gestern  
war ich im Kino: "England of Oxford" an Deutschen  
Gedanken aus Amerika" mit Robert Taylor.  
Es war merkwürdig! Hier, das heißt Müll und  
ich gehen heute an Müll zum Geburtstag.  
Sie denken dauernd, weil du nicht mehr kom-  
men kannst und hast mir eine sehr gute  
sehr persönliche für dich gegeben. Schrei-  
be doch bitte mal an me. Ich habe bei Schweig-  
fers Geburtstag, da haben sich Julia und Bi-  
na rumgedrückt. Ich habe bei mir gedacht, die  
können froh sein, die sind bei einander!! Aber  
ich hier keine Anfälle bekommen! Gestern  
saß ich da mit dem Egonenpaar, spielte  
andauernd Karaoke. Ich habe vielleicht  
noch nie geliebt und das am schönsten  
Anwendungen. Ich das da und gucke an.  
Was soll ich auch in solchen Fällen anderes  
sagen! - Eben kommen Müll und ich an  
Müll. Sie hast geheult und hast mir eine

Famulose

FIGURE 13. Letter by Bracha Fuld from Berlin, October 17, 1938.

Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1938

Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Berlin, den 17.11.1938 17

My dearest good sister, *beaut*

I thank you very much for your nice long letter. It was such a fun to read it. I am very angry, that I have not written my letter from you at home, so I can't answer your questions. I am living with Tietz. It is very funny. I am very glad that I can have Joachim the whole day. We play table-tennis or we play gramophone. The last week our school was not open. Have you read the new-papers? Now my English letter is ready.

Na. Das war eine Arbeit. Also ich wohne bei Tietz und fühle mich dort sehr wohl. Ich bin mit Joachim den ganzen Tag zusammen. Wie geht es bei Dir in der Schule? Kommst Du gut mit? Ist es leicht oder schwer? Jeden Tag warten wir, dass die Schule aufgemacht wird. Morgen ist wieder richtige Schule. Ich freue mich sehr darauf. Dein Schreibtisch ist völlig leer. Meine Sachen sind in dem Wäscheschrank von Dir drin. Ich bekomme ein neues Markenalbum. Alwine hat mir einen prima Pullover gestrickt. In diesen Brief kann ich dir leider keinen Antwortsschein mitreinlegen, weil es keine mehr im Augenblick gibt. Was machen die Domnauers? Die beiden Kleinen vermissen wohl die Omi sehr was? Schicke mir doch mal ein Bild von Steven. Vati ist jetzt gerade hier und unterhält sich mit Frau Tietz. Wir jagen uns immer die neuen Zeitungen von Frau Tietz u.s.w. Es ist nichts für uns drin. Schreitet Deine Kindererziehung fort, oder lässt Du Dich von Ronny und Steven klein kriegen? Hast Du Deine Schulprüfung gut bestanden? Bist Du in der obersten Klasse aufgenommen worden? Joachim wird ja jetzt auch weggehen. Zu Thomas. Der und Joachim lassen Dich grüßen. Tante Margot ist ja schrecklich nervös geworden. Jetzt ist Vati wieder weg und rast weiter. Er hat ja auch eine Menge zu tun. Kann ich mit logisch vorstellen. Gehst Du oft ins Kino oder reicht das Geld dazu nicht? Ich kann ja nicht mehr in den Film gehen! Ich bin neugierig, ob Omi gut in P. ankommt. Ist eigentlich Onkel Schorsch mit uns verwandt? Ich wurde ~~MI~~ nämlich danach gefragt. Ich glaube ja. Ich kann mir denken,

FIGURE 14. Letter by Bracha Fuld from Berlin, December 11, 1938.  
 Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1938  
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library



ERB

Lausanne le 14. 12. 38

Bracha

Mein lieber Floh,

es war nicht nett von mir dich so lange Zeit auf eine Nachricht zu warten zu lassen. Ganz besonders in solch einer Zeit. Was ist nicht alles in dieser Zeit vorgekommen. Du Anne, seitdem ich keinen Brief bekommen habe, hast du sich dir übrigens herzlichst dank, habe ich die ganze Zeit an dich gedacht. Wenn du einmal Zeit hast, so schreibe mir doch bitte ganz genau und ausführlich, was alles geschehen ist, seit meiner Abreise. Ich denke, dass Deine Mutti mit dir in Kontakt war? Ist sie zurückgefahren? Dass, mit keinem Vater, hat mich sehr sehr aufgeweckt. Ich, diese Schweinebande. Entschuldige bitte diesen Ausdruck, aber ich finde wirklich keinen anderen. Du weißt ganz genau, wie ich mit dir meine Pläne teilte. Wenn ich dir auch nicht unendlich mitteilen kann, so hoffe ich, doch, dass du mich auch so verstehst. Vielleicht ist es aber besser für einen kleinen Papi, dass es war alles zu ausführlich. Floh, ich würde dir gerne helfen, aber es ist zu weit weg von mir. Schreibe mir alles was du denkst und tust, und ich werde dich dann nicht so lange auf Antwort warten lassen. Hör mal, schreibe mir doch bitte die Adresse von deiner Mutti und Koppel, da meine Eltern doch auch in London sind. Vielleicht können sie sich dann mal sehen. Auch wenn du einen Rat brauchst, frage nur meinen Papi, er wird dir schon richtig antworten. Hoffentlich gefällt es dir in London. Es ist bestimmt nicht so, wie du es dir gedacht hast, aber scheint ja sehr viel Mut zu haben, und dann wird es schon gehen. Brauchst du irgend etwas? Soll ich dir was schicken. Was geduldest du zum. Ich meine, suchst du dir eine Stellung? Mach nicht Zweifel und so bewahre deine Gesundheit, denn das ist das Beste, was der Mensch hat.

FIGURE 15. Letter by Bracha Fuld from Lausanne, December 12, 1938.

Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1938

Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library



In the following letter, from October 1939, Bracha writes sentences in German, Hebrew, and Arabic in what seems to be a translation exercise.

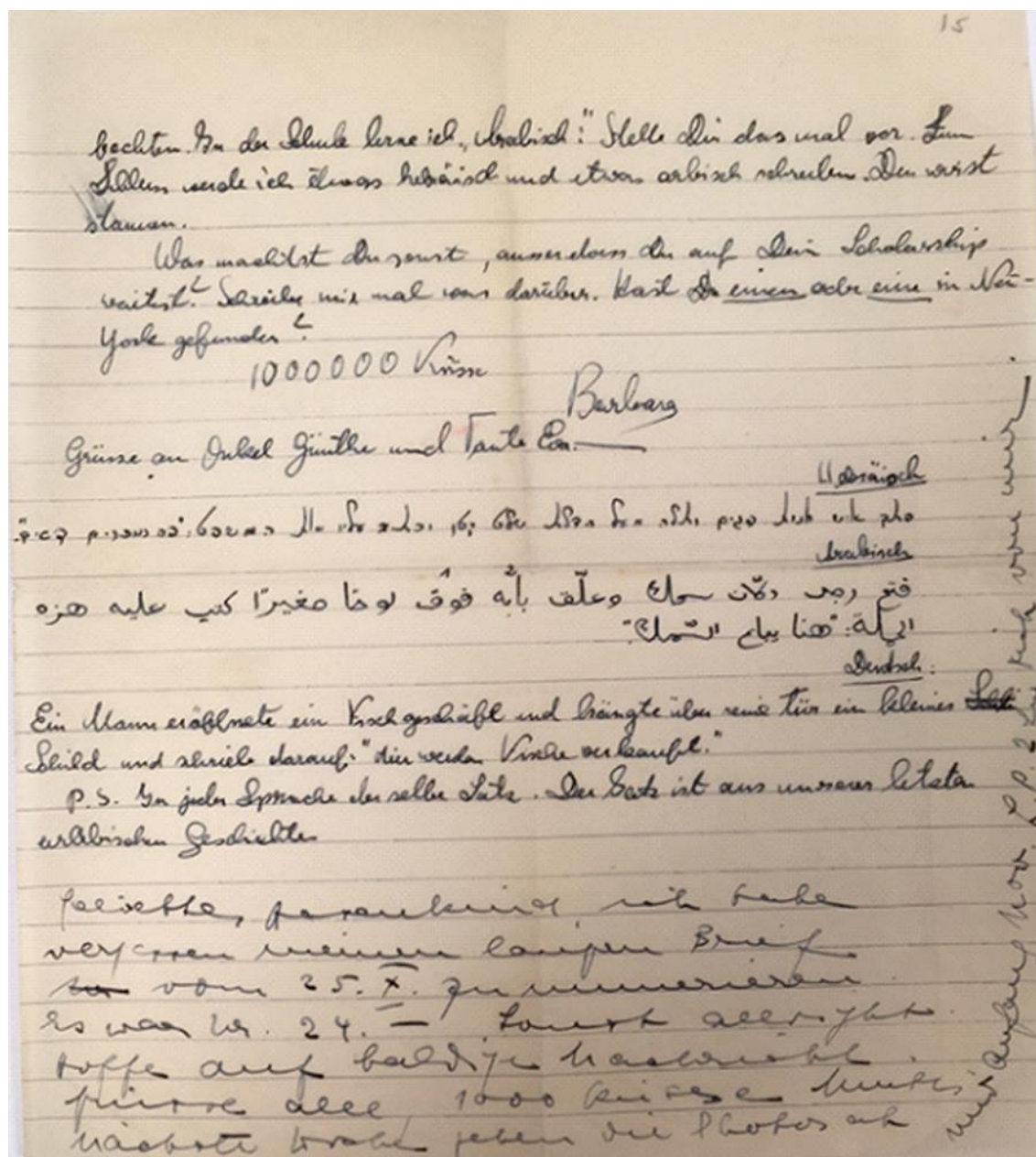


FIGURE 16. Letter by Bracha Fuld and other family members, October 1939.

Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1939

Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

In the following letter, from 1941, Bracha writes sentences in German and Hebrew. In the Hebrew sentence, she explains that now Hebrew is her preferred language. Bracha's grandmother apparently wrote the second part of the letter.

diesem Alter unter mir, 48!! Dem Elze meinen Sie ich  
 sehr besetzt. - Ich muss Schluss machen, denn sonst  
 wird es zu viel. Schreiben mir mal, auch Jack. Liebe  
 Küsse Barbara

אני דאס אלעס נאך דעם. און דאס איז דאס  
 דאס דאס דאס דאס דאס דאס דאס דאס דאס  
 (Krieg ist ab es dass versteht!!) . און דאס דאס דאס

Meine Lieben, ich habe mich sehr gefreut über Eueren  
 Brief d. die reizenden Bilder u. ich will hoffen, daß  
 Ihr immer so vergnügt seid, wie auf diesem Bild  
 d. daß Ihr an Eurer Tarnung, alle 14 Tage zu sprechen  
 festsetzt. Bei der großen Entfernung muß man  
 wenigstens mal Schriftlauf hören, daß Ihr auch glücklich  
 seid, wenn man sich schon nicht persönlich davon  
 überzeugen kann. - Euch geht es gut, wir sind so  
 glückliche Leute hier von allem so sehr glücklich,  
 d. wir sind optimistisch genug, zu glauben, daß es  
 weiter so bleibt. Und man kann so Krieg überleben  
 ist, dann werden wir uns vielleicht sehen u. es  
 werden wir dann, auf immer noch glücklich u.  
 gesunden, vorzuziehen. - Tschüß für heute,  
 sondern alles Gute, kommt große Liebe Euch.

FIGURE 17. Letter by Bracha Fuld and her grandmother [?], 1941.

Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1941

Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library



Let us take a closer look at this letter, written by Bracha on December 22, 1941.

31  
Tel-Aviv 22, 12.41

Dearest Pate!

As well as you have written me a fine birthday letter, I shall say too. I think I must not tell you all those words, which are written usually in such letters. I wish you all those I can wish for your birthday; healthy, happiness, etc. I shall hope that you will celebrate it together with Gorka!! It is very funny to think about you as a married sister. But gradual it will become a place, in my mind. I shall not ask you anything about your life at Jackson. You already told me which I had ~~that~~ liked to know. I can't really imagine life at this town, Tel-Aviv too is not so big, but life is going on like the "New-York". Telephone is ringing more than in "Amsterdam". I would like to show you one washbasin. Everybody cries, "Just like the Riviera". I do not know the Riviera but I think in spite of it that they are right. —

You have asked me some questions in your last letter which I had liked to answer. Firstly about coming to America. Finally we are in war with Japan and I think that there is not any occasion to get over. And secondly the main reason: I think that you should know already that I shall not leave Palestine!! According to this you should not even try to arrange something, though I know that it would not be so easily done. About "future dreams" I cannot tell you much, because I myself do not know much about this. I have two years still finishing school. Preliminary I am working in my own "BUND". (I do not know how you would call it in English). When finished school I shall ~~leave~~ leave the house for a year and shall make agricultural work. What will be after that I cannot imagine I need. My Bund will show me the right way. — My birthday present I got already (before the time) a bicycle!!!! I know that you would still ride on it, but I still do. It is just a nice present, ~~it is not~~ isn't it? You see about "hard things" I don't write (Ich bin nicht Philosoph). To day I have my last Chanuka holiday. To morrow — school! It is awful. English, Grammar, Physics, Mathematics for instance do not enter my mind. I cannot do anything for it. — I think I have written enough! Bleib gesund. Much love to Gorka. Many birthday kisses

Ever Yours  
Babs.

FIGURE 18. Letter by Bracha Fuld from December 22, 1941  
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1941  
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

In this letter (December 22, 1941), Bracha thanks Petra for her birthday letter, and takes the opportunity to wish Petra happy birthday as well. Bracha was then about to turn fifteen years old. She shows enthusiasm for the fact that her sister got married. Bracha always expressed interest in her brother-in-law, Jock Netzorg. From the letter we learn that at that point Petra Fuld was living in Jackson, Michigan, a city located around seventy miles west of Detroit. Bracha says that although Tel Aviv is not a big town, life there “is going on like at New York. Telephone is ringing more than in ‘Reichsstrasse 4’.”<sup>10</sup> I would like to show our seashore. Everybody cries: ‘Just like the Riviera’. I do not know the Riviera but I think in spite of it that they are right”. In the following paragraph, Bracha discusses the possibility of going to America. She explains to her sister that she is not going there: “I think that you should know already that I shall not leave Palestine!!” On the verso, she tells the following: “I have two years till finishing school. Preliminary I am working in our ‘BUND’, (I do not know how you would call it in English). When I finished school, I shall leave the town for a year and shall work agricultural work. What will be after that I cannot imagine now. The Bund will show me the right way.” It is worth noticing Bracha’s use of the German word “Bund”. Most probably, she is not referring to the *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland*, the famous secular Jewish socialist party, because the Bund was opposed to the Zionist movement. She may just be using the German word for “group” or “league,” without any special connotations in mind. On the other hand, her use of the word *bund* may be implicitly referring to a social and ideological environment that had led her to enlist in the Palmach in 1944.<sup>11</sup> Bracha apparently is hiding something from both her family as well as from British authorities who could potentially read her letters. A letter written by her mother Lotte to Petra five days later (Dec. 27, 1941) supports this hypothesis.

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<sup>10</sup> This is where they lived in Berlin (according to correspondence between Petra with Sari Gal, Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box #12).

<sup>11</sup> According to Baumel (135), Bracha Fuld enlisted in the Palmach in 1944 after completing her high school studies.

Tel-Aviv, 27.12.41.

Petra Darling---I just got the news by the wireless, that the Clipper-communications have been resumed and I hasten to write you immediately, hoping that this letter will reach you in time for your birthday. I sent you already two letters by ordinary mail, Nr. 13 on the 10th Dec. and Nr. 14 on the 22nd Dec, with some snap shots included. But I doubt, whether they will reach you at all. Darling, I wish you again and again all the best, keep fit and healthy in every respect, don't lose your matter-of-fact balance and your vitality as well as your optimism, whatever may happen. I wish you all the very best wish one can wish for one's beloved child and I want so badly, that it will no more last too long, that we can celebrate your birthday together. I can hardly believe that it is your nineteenth birthday. I am glad that you will pass it together with Jock in your cosy flat and I hope that it may not be disturbed by any harm or bad news from Jock's family. You can imagine how I am thinking dayly of you and how upset I am about very news concerning Manila. I sincerely hope that your family, Jock dear, will come through without being hurt anyhow and that they may stand this ordeal. What times! There is now really scarcely a single place in the world which doesn't participate in misery and sorrow. Even Hawaii, for me always the incarnation of peace-life full of moon-light dances with no other problems than how to spend life in the most convenient, enjoyable way, is now in the midst of horrors. How is the mood over there? How is business-life. I suppose there must be a boom in special lines. Also in yours? Have you to be enlisted at once? Or when? How are all your dispositions? I beg you instantly to write me detailed and as often as lately, for now more than ever one have to keep up communications. In my last letter of the 22nd Dec. I confirmed your letter dated the 16th November. Did you get the raise of the fixed salary and you a steady place in the company, Petra darling, or is everything overpassed by the recent events? I suppose, not. Did Eva visit you? I have no news from her since her last cable from New-York from the beginning of November. They have been moving to Los Angeles just in the right moment! To have black out and air-raid alarms in a town with 60 and more floors must be no pleasure at all, considering that in smaller towns with less traffic and night-life it is sometimes a mess or depressing. Yesterday night we heard Churchill from Washington, the wireless transmission was marvellous, quite distinctly, and I think it was a stirring event for everybody of us to experience that there are not distances anymore in technical condition and no hindrance for will-power. I include the same snap-shots, I send you already with my last ordinary-mail-letters, please send the other ones then to Eva and one to Rudi. The first time in my life that I have photos taken with my glasses. But I am no more vain. Do you always wear your glasses, Hase? Yesterday was Babs' 15th birthday, nearly in the same age you went alone to the States. But she has grown up enormously, being not always easy to treat, you know her, she is always capricious, sometimes full of peep and charming with you and sometimes detached, taciturn and full of opposition. I always thought that I have a good knowledge of human soul and not a too bad way to treat somebody psychologically. But as to Babs I don't always succeed. I don't worry too much therefore, for I know that this age is always a very precarious one and the relation to one's mother, even if one is on the most friendly and confidential term together, is subdued in special periods of development to many up and downs. She considers me as a "non-Bund-member" and therefore as somebody who doesn't understand its goal and its efforts thereto from the bottom of my heart. She is not yet mature enough to realise that this is not a question of membership or generation.

For the time being she mostly makes a mystery of her meetings, discussions and lectures, she scarcely answers my questions and talks only superficially about the themes. I suppose she is still somehow afraid that I might be opposed in anyway to her, for she is still in that extreme period, where she can't bear any criticism. I don't mind. Everything has to take its time. But sometimes, Petra darling, I am longing terribly for you, it would be so wonderful, if we could be together, now, as you are a "grown up woman". Well, let us hope that all these wishes will be realised soonest. I have to finish this letter for over weight, but I'll write again.

FIGURE 19. Letter by Lotte Fuld from December 27, 1941  
 Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1941  
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Lotte writes,

I always thought that I have a good knowledge of human soul and not a too bad way to treat somebody psychologically. But as to Babs I don't always succeed. I don't worry too much therefore, for I know that this age is always a very precarious one and the relation to one's mother, even if one is on the most friendly and confidential term together, is subdued in special periods of development to many up and downs. She considers me as a 'non-Bund-member' and therefore as somebody who doesn't understand its goal and efforts thereto



from the bottom of my heart. She is not yet mature enough to realize that this is not a question of membership or generation. For the time being she mostly makes a mystery of her meetings, discussions and lectures, she scarcely answers my questions and talks only superficially about the themes.

Further research perhaps will show (or not) that Bracha eventually informed her mother about her underground military activity.



FIGURE 20. Bracha and her mother Lotte Fuld, probably in Tel Aviv, January 1943. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box 35, Petra and Bracha Fuld, 1920s-early 1940s. Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

## Concluding remarks

Although there are currently five streets named after Bracha Fuld in the State of Israel, her truly fascinating story is still a little-known chapter, either in Israel or abroad. One may feel sadness over Bracha's untimely death and the great sacrifice she made to help her fellow Jews in their struggle to reach a new home in the ancient land of their ancestors. Within this sadness, however, one can find comfort in the fact that we are able to hear her voice and passion coming from the letters she wrote. These letters have not yet been studied in depth, and could shed new light on Israel's pre-state years, in general, and on Bracha Fuld's history in particular. We hope to keep researching the Fuld family correspondence housed at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, and we invite students, scholars, and librarians to join us.

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